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Patriarchy and Sexism in Selected Words in *Vicassan Pilipino-English Dictionary* and *Diksyunaryo ng Wikang Filipino*

Pia Arboleda

ビカサン・ピリピノー英語辞典とフィリピノ語事典の  
語彙にみられる家父長制と性差別主義

ピア・アルボレダ

本論文は、フィリピン語に関する二つの主要な文献——ビト・C. サントス（Vito C. Santos）のビカサン・ピリピノ語－英語辞典（*Vicassan Pilipino-English Dictionary*）とフィリピノ語辞典（*Diksyunaryo ng Wikang Filipino*）——に見られる単語の定義を分析したものである。この二つの辞書がフィリピンの男性中心社会・文化を映したものであるという点に主に焦点を当てる。なぜなら、辞書というものが言葉の指示的意味と内包的意味を知るために主要な文献として使われるため、辞書が含む意味の偏りはいかなるものであっても辞書の使い手のモノの見方に影響を与えうると考えるからである。そうして、辞書とは男性中心であるということを映す鏡であるだけでなく、実際はそれを不変のものとしている。本論文は、分析を基に、非性差別主義的なフィリピノ語の使用についても取り上げていく。

Kasumpa-sumpa  
ang maging babae sa panahong ito

Depenisyong pamana  
ng nakaraa't kasulukuyan

[It is curséd  
to be a woman of this age

Definitions bequeathed  
by the past and the present]

— Elynia Mabanglo  
*Babae*<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

In learning or using a language, the dictionary is the most commonly used reference. It is often assumed that a dictionary describes words in an accurate and neutral manner. However, dictionaries are not always flawless. Vito C. Santos, a prominent Filipino lexicographer and language expert, says

The lexicographer, as a disseminator of information with regards to meanings, spellings, syllabifications, etymologies... of words, has an important role and responsibility in the study of a language. A knowledgeable lexicographer is, naturally, an asset; but an unreliable one only adds confusion in the learning of a language, for every wrong information that he [sic] makes is passed on from one person to another.<sup>2</sup>

Lexicographers must therefore exert great effort in ascertaining accuracy. Moreover, as it is a component of language, dictionaries are not independent from their social context, and they reflect certain biases and cultural attitudes.

It is frequently claimed that dictionaries, like linguistic enterprise in general, are descriptive rather than prescriptive. They merely record the way people use words, without fear or favor. This has sometimes served as an excuse for including very offensive definitions... The most important bias of dictionaries is toward the written rather than the spoken word... The consequence is that the coinings of dictionaries are the coinings of those who write literature—middle class men. Clearly, then, dictionaries reflect the prejudices of the ruling class.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, it becomes pertinent to study how dictionaries reflect the cultural attitudes of their society. This research centers on cultural attitudes that relate to gender issues in Philippine society.

This paper is premised on the idea that Philippine society is patriarchal, and that patriarchy manifests itself in language and other cultural aspects. I maintain that sexism exists in the Philippine language. To explore this idea, I analyze two of the major references on Filipino—Vito C. Santos' *Vicassan Filipino-English Dictionary* (Manila: National Bookstore, 1988) and *Diksyunaryo ng Wikang Filipino* (Manila: Linangan ng mga Wika sa Pilipinas, 1989). These are two of the most comprehensive and most commonly used dictionaries in the Philippines. Vito C. Santos is the son of Lope K. Santos, author of the famous Filipino novel *Banaag at Sikat* and *Balarila ng Wikang Pambansa*, one of the first reference books on Tagalog grammar. *Diksyunaryo ng Wikang Filipino*,

on the other hand, was compiled by language experts from the *Linangan ng Wikang Pambansa* of the Philippine Department of Education. Since this paper is based on research that I conducted in 1995,<sup>4</sup> newer dictionaries like *UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino* (Manila: Anvil Publications, 2001) have not been included in this study. I will focus on written words and will make only few references on the actual usage of language (parole). It is important to note that the Philippine language is highly influenced by Spanish. Therefore, some of these observations may not have been characteristics of the native Philippine language, but may be due to the colonial influence of Spanish. I will also relate some of these observations to a few English words as I base my analysis on gender theories written in English.

My central argument is that these two dictionaries are a reflection of Philippine patriarchal society and culture. Since dictionaries are used as primary references for the denotation and connotation of words, whatever biases they contain may influence the perspectives of its users. Thus, the dictionary not only mirrors patriarchal attitudes but it in fact perpetuates them.

In delving into selected definitions in both dictionaries, it is my aim to answer the following questions: What representations of women and men are conveyed by the words and definitions from these dictionaries? Are these representations stereotypical or not? What cultural perspectives and values regarding sex roles are perpetuated by these dictionaries?

### Theoretical Framework

[Stereotypes are] roles to which society expects women [and men] to conform. [They] reinforce some [behavioral] patterns and repress others.<sup>5</sup>

These patterns are taught to us from childhood through the process of socialization. Adherence to these roles results in affirmation, while deviation from them results in punishment.

Stereotypes, however false, tend to persist for as long as they reinforce important social inequities. So long as women are subordinate to men, their language has got to be characterized as indicating natural subservience, unintelligence and immaturity.<sup>6</sup>

Women are usually relegated to the private sphere of the home while men domi-

nate the public sphere. This dichotomy reinforces the idea that women's main role in society is in giving birth and taking care of children, while men control the productive arena and other institutions outside the home.

Women's occupations were taken to be rooted in and a necessary consequence of their reproductive functions, whereas men's jobs were unrestricted. Women's destiny to bear and suckle children was taken to define their whole body and mind, and therefore their psychological capacities and social tasks. Men were thereby potential members of the broadest social and cultural groups, while women's sphere of action, it was constantly insisted, was the private arena of home and family.<sup>7</sup>

The problem not only lies in the fact that these two realms are separated, but that the masculine/public sphere is accorded more importance and value than the feminine/private sphere.

Domestic services [the domain of women] are devalued in advanced societies where work is defined as wage labor and is separated from domestic space.<sup>8</sup>

These concepts inform my critique. Moreover, the sections of my analysis are patterned after Casey Miller and Kate Swift's *Handbook on Nonsexist Writing* (USA: Harper Collins, 1988).

## Analysis

*Babae / Lalaki: Maybahay / Tao*

*(Woman / Man: Housewife / Person)*

The distinction or identity of something begins with its name. The manner by which a name or word is used will define its role or function in our world. This study begins with an exploration of the words *babae* (woman) and *lalaki* (man).

**babae** png. 1. Taong nasa sapat na gulang, na ang kasarian ay ukol sa pagiging ina. 2. Sinumang nilikha o anumang halamang may katangian sa pagiging ina o pagkakabunga. 3. Hindi kasal na asawa ng isang lalaki. Karaniwang tawag ito sa mga babang nakikilaguyo sa mga lalaking may asawa. <Si Maria ay babae lamang ni Tomas.> (DWF)

**babae** n. 1. woman; distinguished from *lalaki*, man. 2. mistress; concubine, common-law wife, syn: kalunya, kerida, kaagulo, kulasisi. (VIC)

*lalaki* png. Kasarian ng tao o hayop na naiiba sa babae. (DWF)

From these definitions, we gather that motherhood is the foundation upon which being woman rests. Beyond this, womanhood ceases to have value. To fulfill these requisites of womanhood is simple enough. All a woman needs to do is to give birth and become a mother.

However, not all women are capable of childbirth. More importantly, some women opt not to bear children. Because they do not fit the definition, would that make them non-women? In Philippine society, the usual reply would be, “Babae pa rin, pero *hindi tunay* na babae, hindi kumpleto ang pagkababae.” (They’re still women, but *not real* women. They’re inconsummate women.)

The perpetuation of this perspective exerts pressure on women and may influence their behavior. For example, some women resort to childbirth and motherhood just to prove their worth even if they are not physically or emotionally ready for the task. Many women view menopause as a devaluation of themselves, making them ‘less of a woman.’ Not being able to marry or bear children may lead women to feel anxious, guilty or inadequate. It is through motherhood that women can feel society’s acceptance. But motherhood is not all there is to being a woman. In promoting this definition of woman, it seems all other societal values become inferior to motherhood and ignores other valuable aspects of women. It is important for women to be recognized also for their capabilities (productivity) and not just their ability to give birth (reproductivity).<sup>9</sup>

The example *Si Maria ay babae lamang ni Tomas*. (Maria is just Tomas’ woman.) even rubs the wound by embodying derogatory sub-definitions such as *kabit* or *kulasisi* (*mistress*) to the word *woman*. Although cohabiting or adulterous men may also be called *kabit*, this term was excluded from the published definition of *lalaki*. This seems to associate the practice of illicit affairs exclusively to the *babae*.

Contrasting the definition of *lalaki* versus *babae*, the abundance in detail of the definition of *babae* is readily apparent. These details are prescriptive, indicating the requisites needed to be called *babae*. On the other hand, *lalaki* is simply defined as *hindi babae*, being the opposite of *babae*. There are no requirements, no qualifications, and no demeaning examples such as *Si Tomas ay lalaki lamang ni Maria* (Tomas is just Maria’s illicit lover). For men, the mere fact that they are men is enough to become accepted in society.

Since the word *ina* (mother) is closely associated with *babae*, its definition was compared to the definition of *ama* (father).

*ina* 1. Magulang na babae. 2. Babaing nakapagluwal na ng sanggol. (DWF)

*ama* png. 1. Magulang na lalaki. 2. Sinumang ninunong lalaki (lalo na ang nagtatag ng isang lahi, lipi, o angkan). 3. Isang nagbibigay ng pagkakadiling-ama sa iba; ang parang amang tagapagtanggol o tagapanustos. 4. Isa sa mga pangunahing lalaki ng isang lungsod, atbp. 5. Mga taong nagsimula o nagtatag ng anuman. (DWF)

*ama* n. father. 2. (colloq) founder, organizer syn: tagapagtatag, fundador. 3. sponsor or author, as of a resolution syn: ang nagpanukala. (VIC)

These definitions show the imbalance between the values accorded to *ina* and *ama* and the delineation between the lowly domestic domain and the lofty public domain. Women are bound to the home, while men dominate the larger sphere outside the home.

The dictionary mentions the commonly used phrase *ilaw ng tahanan* (the light of the home) as a metaphor for *ina*, while the *ama* is the *haligi ng tahanan* (the house's main foundation). The masculine metaphor connotes more power. Strength and stability are masculine, while radiance and nurturance are decidedly feminine. While others may argue that this relationship is complementary, these two elements are not regarded equally. Motherly care is thought to be more 'commonplace' than a father's time and attention, and the definitions appear to give the latter greater recognition. The use of these metaphors ignores the fact that fathers also exhibit nurturance, and mothers also provide strength and stability for the home.

The weighty designations in the definition of *ama* do not have appropriate complements in the definition of *ina*. So, do we call the German nuns who established a prestigious school for girls in Manila in 1906 as '*mga ama ng St. Scholastica's College*' ('fathers of St. Scholastica's College')? It also would not make sense to call Gabriela Silang, the most prominent female revolutionary leader in Philippine history, as '*ama ng rebolusyong Filipino*' ('father of Philippine Revolution'). This limitation of the language excludes women's contribution to the larger society. Instead of using the exclusive term *ama*, encompassing terms such *fundador* (founder), *ninuno* (forebear), and *tagapagtanggol* (defender) should be encouraged.<sup>10</sup>

The next role accorded to women is that of being a wife (*asawa*):

asawa png. Lalaki o babaing ikinasal at ang kaugnayan ng bawat isa sa kanila. sk: kabiyaq, kaisang-palad, kataling-puso, esposo, *maybahay* (*babae*), *tao* (*lalaki*). (italics mine) (DWF)

The phrasing of this definition is almost satisfactory due to its emphasis on the mutual relationship between husband and wife (*kaugnayan ng bawat isa sa kanila*). However, in differentiating between *babae*=*maybahay* (housewife) and *lalaki*=*tao* (person), the equality disintegrates. It implies that upon entering marriage, a woman is reduced to a role, *maybahay*. All other aspects of her personality are ignored. The man's status as a person, however, remains unchanged.<sup>11</sup>

bagong-tao png. 1. Binata; lalaking ang taglay na gulang (kung sa araw ay nasa katanghalian) at kasalukuyan pa lamang nagsisimula sa hinaharap at pananagutan; lalaking wala pang asawa. (DWF)

tao n. 1. human being, person; man, as distinguished from animal... 3. husband: as in, <wala rito ang tao ko.> (VIC)

These definitions show that men possess the monopoly of personhood, wedded or otherwise. Before being wed, he is a *bagong-tao* (literally, new person, young man). After marriage, he becomes a total person (*tao*). No significant changes happen to their lives, no prescribed roles. If there are stereotypical roles associated with men, such as being a breadwinner (though this is slowly being altered with the emergence of numerous professional women), the situation is not reinforced by language.

In using the generic word *tao* to refer only to husband, women are marginalized, despite their being *tao* as well. *Maybahay* relegates the wife to maternal and domestic roles. It is, therefore, better to just use the word *asawa* to refer to both husband and wife.

### **Manika / Malikot: Socialization and Stereotypes**

Language is crucial to growing up and learning how to behave. As a child learns to speak and understand the meaning of words, the child's view of the world is formed. Through words that are related to being a boy or a girl, a child imbibes society's concepts of what is considered acceptable masculine and feminine behavior. Coates argues,

Language is an important part of the socialization process, and children are socialized into culturally approved sex roles largely through language.<sup>12</sup>



In Filipino, two words that are associated with childhood are *manika* (doll) and *malikot* (active).

*manika* png. laruan ng batang babae. (DWF)

*malikot/kalikutan* png. Gulang ng bata na nasa labis na kasiglahan, kagaslawan at kapilyuhan (*sa lalaki*). 2. Kalagayan ng labis na paggalaw o pagkilos, kagaslawan. (*italics mine*) (DWF)

Although apparently neutral, closer scrutiny would reveal that these words promote semantics of oppression. Playing with dolls is limited to girls, while being active describes only boys.

These definitions reflect general societal views on the socialization of children. Many would consider these definitions harmless or natural, since only girls play with dolls anyway. However, the effects of these definitions upon the consciousness of children is overlooked. Although masked as a game, playing with dolls actually teaches kids how to nurture children. Since playing with dolls is permitted only for girls, only girls learn their role as future mothers. In Philippine society, boys are forbidden to play with dolls because it is not men's role to take care of children. Thus we would often hear adults tell boys, "*Bakit ka naglalaro ng manika? Bakla ka ba?*" (Why are you playing with dolls? Are you gay?) At a very early age, the delineation between sex roles is imbibed by children.

Most girls are also active but the first definition of *malikot* excludes this idea. This terminology may lead many to think that being active is an inherently male trait. Consequently, active girls are called *tomboy* and inactive boys or those who play with dolls are considered *bakla*.

*Bakla* and *tomboy*. At an early age, children are introduced to these terms and subsequently are made aware of sex role stereotypes. On these words are ingrained the traits that are expected of boys and girls.

*tomboy* png. Babaing may kilos o asal-lalaki; babaing may damdaming maka-lalaki.

*binabae* png. Taong may katangian ng babae at lalaki; 2. Tao o hayop na may kasariang panlalaki at pambabae. sk: bakla, siyoke, etsos, silahis. (DWF)

Philippine society shuns individuals who cannot conform to the ensconced gender

roles. It is not considered normal to deviate from these stereotypes. According to Miller and Swift,

The implication of the word tomboy is that an active, inquisitive, energetic girl acts like a boy, not a girl. In other words, she is abnormal for one of her sex.

\* \* \*

Although English lacks sex-specific words to describe the kind of girl who is labeled a tomboy, it does have an abundance of sex-neutral terms to choose from. Words like strong, vigorous, direct, adventurous, spirited, self-confident, competitive and physically courageous can serve the same purpose without confusing the child's self-perception and sense of sexual identity.<sup>13</sup>

There is ambiguity in females having male temperaments. Those who are considered tomboy do not necessarily desire to be male. But because they are *malikot* (active) and not 'girlish,' this is not viewed as normal and they are said to be *mala-lalaki* (boyish).

Socialization has set in our consciousness the established concepts of femininity and masculinity. If an individual exhibits traits that run counter to being boys or girls, they are considered *alanganin* (uncertain, ambiguous), neither masculine nor feminine.

*bakla* png. 1. Pagkabighani sa anumang maganda sa tingin o malas. 2. Pagkatigalgal sa isang bagay na hinahambingan lalo pa at bago sa paningin. 3. Pagkatigatig ng kalooban dahil sa takot o pangamba. 4. Pagkagulantang sanhi sa isang pangyayaring kahambal-hambal. 5. Pag-aalala (DWF)

*ikabakla* pd. 1. Maging dahilan ng pagkatigatig, pag-aalala atbp. sk: ikabahala. 2. Maging dahilan ng pagiging binabae o bakla. (DWF)

Moreover, the word *bakla* (male homosexual) carries with it the connotation of weakness, fickleness and inertness, and is synonymous with fear (*takot*), anxiety (*pangamba*) and worry (*pag-aalala*, *pagkabahala*). A man who expresses these traits is therefore called *bakla* or *binabae* (girlish) because he does not conform to Philippine society's concept of the macho stereotype.

These definitions limit the roles of women and men. Instead of coercing individuals to change their behavior to conform to these roles, we should promote a change in our consciousness concerning these stereotypes.

The characteristics we habitually identify as ‘womanly’ and ‘feminine’—receptivity, tenderness and nurturance, to name a few of the positive ones—can also characterize men. And contrary to conventional wisdom, women share such ‘manly’ and ‘masculine’ attributes as boldness, vigor, directness, and courage. These adjective and their associates, terms like masculinity and femininity, manliness and womanliness, have become so overlaid with societal dogmas setting forth what women and men ‘should’ be like that they have lost almost all meaning. Whose ‘should’ are we talking about, and how do we know from one use to the next what subjective cast these sex-linked words are intended to convey?<sup>14</sup>

Sex-linked stereotypes are evident even in definitions of hairstyles and physical appearance, as in the following examples:

**lantaga** png. Tirintas na *buhok ng babae*. (italics mine) (DWF)

**tirintas** syn. salapid, queue, pigtail, braid. (VIC)

**tirintasin** v. to braid the hair, *esp. a woman*. (italics mine) (VIC)

**lugay** png. Pagkakaladlad ng buhok ng babae na *karaniwan ay mahaba*; kalag. (italics mine) (DWF)

**lugaygay** pr. Magulo at nakalugay na buhok ng babae. (DWF)

**hikaw** png. Hiyas na palawit sa tainga ng babae. (DWF)

Phrases such as *karaniwan ay mahaba* (usually long) are not only descriptive but prescriptive because of the repetitive use of *babae* upon the mention of *buhok* (hair). The use of *magulo* (unkempt) is not a description but a criticism of the hair’s condition. To keep ‘usually long’ hair from becoming unruly, it should not be *nakalugay* (laid down).

The definition of the noun form of *tirintas* is non-sexist. The definition of the verb form, however, includes ‘esp. of a woman.’ With today’s androgynous hairstyles, it is no longer logical to insist on the use of *ng babae* (of women) for these definitions. Because long hairstyles for men are now common, *tirintas* (braiding) and *lugaygay* (to wear hair loosely) is no longer exclusive to women. Men sporting earrings (*hikaw*) are slowly becoming commonplace, thus this definition is no longer accurate and can benefit from alteration.

When women are repeatedly included in the definition of long hair, this reinforces the stereotype that men must have short hair and women must have long hair. In order

to make definitions nonsexist, the words *babae* or *lalaki* are unnecessary. For example,

lantaga png. Tirintas na buhok. (DWF)

tirintasin v. to braid the hair. (VIC)

lugaygay pr. Magulo at nakalugay na buhok. (DWF)

Even the definition of *hikaw* (earrings) should no longer refer exclusively to women since the wearing of earrings has become acceptable to both women and men in Philippine society.

hikaw png. Hiyas na palawit sa tainga. (DWF)

In Filipino, the honorific words for women and men are *binibini* (miss) and *ginoo* (mister), respectively. But apart from being just titles, they convey certain traits that comprise being *ginoo*.

*ginoo* 1. Lalaking may mahusay na pinagkalakhan, pinag-aralan at asal. 2. Tawag na pamitagan sa isang lalaki. 3. Lalaking marunong magpahalaga sa kanyang mga salita. maginoo 1. Lalaking magalang at mabuti ang kalooban. 2. Sinumang nagtataglay ng ugaling matapat sa kanyang mga sinasabi. <Ang isang maginoo ay karapat-dapat sa isang kanais-nais na pakikisama. > 3. Taguring pamitagan sa isang tao, sa marangal niyang lipi o angkang pinagbuhatan at ayon pa rin sa taas ng karunungan kanyang pinag-aralan at tinataglay sk: kabalyero, Don, senyor. (DWF)

galante/galanteriya png. mapitagang pagbibigay at pag-aasikaso lalo na sa mga babae, pagkamaginoo (DWF)

taring adj. elegant, elegantly dressed, referring *esp. to a young man* or bachelor (*italics mine*) (VIC)

According to this definition, men should ideally be respectful (*magalang*), loyal (*matapat*), intelligent (*mataas ang karunungan*), elegant (*makisig, taring*) and gallant towards women (*galanteriya*). Moreover, a *ginoo* always keeps his word (*marunong magpahalaga sa kanyang salita*). To become a respectable man is dependent on all these virtues. The definition for *binibini*, however, is focused on modesty (*yumi*), patience (*katimpi-an*), order (*kaayusan*), refinement (*kapinuhan*) and gentleness (*mahinhin*):

binibini 1. Bb., pamagat na ikinakabit sa unahan ng pangalan ng isang dalaga. 2. Babaing nasa kabataan; dalaga.

bini png. Katimpian at kaayusan, hinhin, yumi. <Ang bini ay siya kong unang hana-hanap sa isang babae.> (DWF)

yumi n. refined manners or modest behavior or character, esp. of a lady syn. hinhin, bini, kaban, kapinuhan. (VIC)

While *ginoo* and *binibini* correspond to each other as honorific terms, their meanings are uneven. A woman may also be intelligent and honorable, but the definition of *binibini* does not include these traits. The terms *delicate* and *modest* are considered appropriate for women, but would prove insulting to men. In Philippine society, 'weak' men (*mahihinang lalaki*) are ridiculed and are called *ander* or *bayugin*.

ander pr. Talun-talunan ng asawa ang isang lalaki. Sinasabi ring *ander di-saya*. (DWF)

bayugin png. Lalaking duwag at sinasabing nakadamit babae o nakasaya. (DWF)

dominado pr. Supil; ang tao o hayop na sumusunod sa nais ng isang tao. <Dominado ni Rosie ang kanyang bana.>

*Ander di saya* (under the saya) literally means 'under the wife's skirt' and implies being henpecked or dominated by a woman. In Philippine culture women are expected to accede to men's wishes and the reversed situation is considered abnormal. Often, a man caught doing household chores, especially the laundry, is called *ander*. This bias is reflected in language. Instead of gaining praise for performing a fair share of the housework, men are insulted and ridiculed. Majority of Filipino men refuse to do housework to avoid being perceived as subservient or dominated by women. This situation leads to women bearing the brunt of domestic chores.

The other derogatory word, *bayugin*, is synonymous to 'coward' (*duwag*) and 'wearing a woman's skirt' (*sinasabing nakadamit babae o nakasaya*). Showing fear or weakness is not considered masculine. This puts pressure on men to always exhibit courage and strength. Failure to fulfill this expectation also leads to verbal insults directed at men. But probably the worst insult that may be hurled at men is *ehong*:

ehong png. Tawag sa isang lalaking niloloko ng kanyang asawa; lalaking ang asawa ay nakikilaguyo sa ibang lalaki. (DWF)

*Ehong* refers to a man whose wife is having an affair. How do we call a woman who is being cheated on by her husband? The word *ehong* has no equivalent for women. If

there would be one, it would probably be *martir* (martyr). There would be no tone of derision directed at the husband's action. Instead, there would be praises for a woman's patience (*katimpian*), despite the husband's transgression. Within a patriarchal culture, adultery is considered a man's offense against another man because wives are considered personal property that should not be coveted. Thus, men who could not protect their wives from being 'taken away' are called *ehong*. However, a woman is her own person and must not be treated as her husband's possession.

### ***Kiri at Kerida: Insults and Verbal Abuse***

If some words exist to humiliate weak males, this is exceeded by words that are used as insults aimed at women:

*tamarisya* n./adj. referring to a lazy girl or woman. (VIC)

*tagubak* n. a big, fat woman. (VIC)

*dragon* png. 3. *Babaing mahigpit na nagbabantay*. (DWF)

*birago* n. a strong, manlike woman; virago, amazon sk: *binalaki*. (VIC)

The above definitions show that being slim, fair and beautiful is the norm set for women by society. Women who are fat are subjected to severe scorn. Women should be hardworking, meek and obedient to their husbands or else they become targets of ridicule. The terms *dragon* and *birago* are words derived from English. The term *dragon* has positive connotations. Dragons are mysterious, powerful, brave and free, but these qualities are lost in the definition. In this case, *dragon* is used only to refer to wives who guard their husbands closely from competition (*babaing mahigpit na nagbabantay*). The image of the jealous and overly possessive wife is a stereotype, and these definitions reflect and perpetuate them.

Although the word *birago* (from the English *virago*) is not commonly used in daily conversations, its inclusion in the dictionary reflects the attitude that women who are strong are 'manlike' or *binalaki*. For women, strength is a good quality to have and must be celebrated, but this definition does not do that.

There are also countless words that describe women as *kiri* (flirts), *puta* (whores) and *kerida* (mistresses):

*malandi* pr. makiri, hitad o maharot (*kung sa babae*). (italics mine) (DWF)

*landi* pd. Magpakita ng pagkagiliw sa mga lalaki; humarot, humantad. (DWF)

**kalandian** png. Kakirihan, kaalembungan, kalanturan, *kaputahan*. (italics mine) (DWF)

**lumantod** pd. Lumandi; mang-akit ng lalaki; humarot. (DWF)

**kahaliparutan** png. Kakirihan, kaalembungan, kalandian, kaartehan. (DWF)

*Malandi, makiri, hitad, maharot, alembong* and *maarte* are all words that describe women as flirtatious. In this definition, it is made synonymous to the word *kaputahan*, meaning whore. Here are other words that refer to women as whores:

**hostes** png. 1. May handa, maybahay, punong-abala. 2. Babaing naninilbihan sa isang naytklab.

**nangangalakal ng laman** idy. Babaing nagbibili ng panandaliang aliw; nangangalakal ng puri.

**burikak** png. Tawag sa babaing nagbibili ng panandaliang aliw; gardenya; pampam; puta.

**kalapating mababa ang lipad** idy. Babaing may mahalay na hanapbuhay. <Hinuhuli ng pulis ang mga kalapating mababa ang lipad.> (DWF)

**kalabitin** pr. Tawag sa babaing madaling matukso sa mga lalaki sk: talipandas makiri. (DWF)

In the definition of *kalabitin* (to nudge with the tip of the finger) it is the men who perform the solicitation but it is the women who are considered flirtatious (*talipandas*) and easily tempted (*madaling matukso*). When women express interest, they are called flirts or whores. Men who flirt with women are not called *kiri* or *malandi*. Instead, it is referred to as *ligaw* (courtship) and the word does not carry with it any negative connotations.

All these derogations are aimed only at women. Although there are also male sex workers in Philippine society, there are no derogatory terms for them. The closest equivalent to a *lalaking puta* (male whore) is *gigolo*, derived from the same word in English.

**gigolo** png. Binatang palikerong umaasa sa kita ng mga babae niya. (DWF)

This definition is less derogatory compared to all the definitions attached to female sex workers. Although a *gigolo* is 'an unmarried man who is dependent on *his women* for his livelihood,' the last word *niya* denotes possession (*mga babae niya*). This implies that

the women are his, and this construction affords a small degree of control over 'his women' despite being dependent on them. The same could not be said of the definition for *puta*, *hostes* or *burikak*.

The stereotype of women being temptations or negative elements in society is promoted by language. One definition even aligns women with vices:

*magumon* pd. Mahilig sa masamang ugali, mabuyo sa bisyo <*magumon sa sugal, alak at babae*> (italics mine) (DWF)

In Filipino, *magumon* means to become entrenched in vices (*bisyo*). In itself the definition is not sexist but the example is—*magumon sa sugal, alak at babae* (to become entrenched in gambling, alcohol and women). Phrased this way, it puts women in the same category as objects and bad habits.

Linguistic descriptions of men and women who commit adultery are also unequal. Note the following examples:

*adultera* n. woman guilty of adultery; adulteress sk: babaing nanlalalaki, babaing taksil sa asawa (VIC)

*adultero* n. adulterer, babaero, mangangalunya. (VIC)

*adultero* png. pr. Mapambabae, mapangalunya, babaero. (DWF)

*mambabae* pd. Mangalunya o makisama sa isang babae na parang asawa nang hindi pinakakasalan ito. (DWF)

*manlalaki* pd. Magtaksil sa asawa ng babae. (DWF)

A woman who commits adultery is *taksil* (unfaithful) while a man is just called *babaero* (womanizer). *Taksil* and *babaero* are two terms that differ greatly. Although it takes a man and a woman to commit adultery, the greater fault and guilt are directed at women. The sin of women is disloyalty to her husband, while men are criticized only for having many women. In some cases, having many mistresses is even admired and envied. In a society that promotes machismo, it is prestigious for men to be swarmed by women. Even the Philippine epic hero Bantugen is portrayed to have brought home one hundred women from his travels around the world.

In the following example, the definition of *panlalaki* (sleeping with a man), the word *taksil* or betrayal is attached. On the other hand, the definition of *pambababae*



(womanizing) excludes betrayal and puts emphasis only on the absence of marriage (*hindi pinakakasalan ito*).

**mambabae** pd. Mangalunya o makisama sa isang babae na parang asawa nang hindi pinakakasalan ito.

**manlalaki** pd. Magtaksil sa asawa ng babae.

Furthermore, although the idiom *naglalaro ng apoy* (playing with fire) may be used in spoken language to refer to both women and men who commit adultery, the definition only refers to women:

**naglalaro ng apoy** – idy. Ikinakabit sa mga *babaing* nagtataksil sa asawa. (DWF)

The definitions must be revised to remove the blame and derision that is usually directed at women. They must describe only the act committed by either men or women, for example:

**adulteryo** png. Kusang-loob na pakikisama sa isang taong may asawa sa sinumang hindi niya asawa. sk. pakikiapid, pangangalunya. (DWF)

**kabit** png. Tawag sa *babae o lalaking* kinakasama ng isang may asawa sk: kalunya. (DWF)

Derogatory definitions also apply to aspects of reproduction. The word *hima* (vaginal secretions) is defined as sticky (*nanlalagkit*) dirt (*dumi*) that has a peculiar smell (*may amoy*).

**hima** png. Duming nanlalagkit sa punung-katawan ng babae. 2. Maputi at may amoy na sekresyong naiipon sa kaluban. (DWF)

This definition is extremely offensive to women. In contrast, the words related to male secretion—*esperma* and *semilya* (semen)—are straightforward descriptions that contain no negative connotations. The idea that *semilya* is the seed and source of life has positive connotations, while all words associated with *hima* are negative.

**esperma** 2. Tabod o tamod (DWF)

**semilya** 1. seed sk. binhi. (VIC)

Sexually transmitted diseases are called *sakit sa babae* (diseases from women).

gonorea png. sakit na lihim na lalong kilala sa tawag na *sakit sa babae* na ang pag-kakakilanlan ay may pagtulo ng nana buhat sa punung-katawan. (italics mine) (DWF)

tulo n. discharge of mucus and pus from the genito-urinary tract; gonorrhea syn. *sakit ng babae*. (italics mine) (VIC)

tumulo syn. magkasakit sa babae. (DWF)

This implies that women are the sole transmitters of sexually transmitted diseases but this is medically inaccurate. Phrasing the definitions this way pins the blame solely on women. Instead of *sakit sa babae*, these definitions must be changed to *sakit na naililipat sa sekswal na paraan* (sexually transmitted diseases).

#### ***Landi / Ligaw: Passivity and Aggression***

Women and men both feel affection and love. The Filipino language, however, differentiates between the terms used according to whether men or women express these emotions. When men are infatuated and make their feelings known to their beloved, this is called *ligaw* (courtship).

ligaw png. 1. pangingibig ng lalaki sa babae. 2. Panunuyo dahil sa isang pakay sa isang taong pinipitahan ng anuman. (DWF)

ligawan pd. Suyuin (*ang isang babae*) upang makamtan ang pag-ibig nito. (italics mine) (DWF)

suyuin v. to try to please another by being kind, accommodating to him; ingratiate oneself to someone. 2. to try to win the love of a girl by giving her gifts and doing favors for her in every occasion. (VIC)

According to this definition, only men are entitled to initiate courtship. Courtship is done by being kind but also 'by giving her gifts.' This puts forward the impression that women are materialistic, and that their favor or love can be won over by gifts.

On the other hand, if women show interest in men, they are called *malandi* (flirt).

landi pd. Magpakita ng pagkagiliw sa mga lalaki; humarot, humatad. (DWF)

Although this is slowly changing, the norm in Philippine society is that men court wom-

en, and not the other way around. If women break away from this norm, they are insulted and frowned upon. The terms *humarot* and *humatad* have undesirable connotations for women and are closely related to words meaning indecent.

If women feel affection towards men, the acceptable course of action for them is to try to be attractive and alluring, in the hope that their beloved would notice them and initiate courtship. If the act of calling attention to themselves is overdone, however, women are again subjected to derision. Landi/Ligaw: This dichotomy of terms dictates whose role it is to be aggressive and who can only hope and wait. The feelings of love and affection are the same, but society sets limits on women's expression of these emotions.

Women who reach a mature age without having suitors or lovers are said to be *kinupasan ng panahon* (literally, faded through time, time has passed them by), *nilubugan ng araw* (overcome by darkness) or *walang akyat* (no visitors).

**kinupasan ng panahon** idy. Tumandang dalaga o binata. (DWF)

**walang-akyat** adj. said of a bachelor woman who is not visited in her house by wooers. (VIC)

**nilubugan ng araw** idy. Wala nang pag-asa; matanda na. <Nilubugan ng araw ang dalagang naghihintay ng mayamang manliligaw.> (DWF)

All these indicate passivity. There is nothing that women can do but wait. In the absence of suitors, they are made to look pathetic. Women who grow old and unmarried lose all hope (*wala nang pag-asa*). Even if a woman chooses to remain unwed, society still looks upon them as pitiful. About women who are not married, people would usually remark, "Bakit kaya wala siyang asawa? Hindi naman siya pangit. Baka may deperensya siya." (I wonder why she is unmarried. She is not that bad-looking. Perhaps something is wrong with her.) Although *kinupasan ng panahon* is sometimes used for mature men who are not married, men are less likely to be regarded with pity or derision than women.

Aggression is also exhibited in the following words that refer to courtship:

**asinta** png. Nais, puntirya. <Sino sa mga dalagang iyon ang asinta mo?>

**hanting** png. Paghahanap ng maliligawan.

**diga** pd. Pagpapahayag ng pag-ibig <Hindi ayos ang diga ni Pedro, hindi siya nagus-

tuhan ni Pina.>(DWF)

These words link men to aggressive behavior. The word *hanting* (to look for someone to court) is derived from the word the English word *hunt* (to look for prey or attack). In the act of courtship, women play the role of the prey, not the hunter. *Asinta* means to want something but also means to set your eyes on a target. So in this sense, women are passive targets for men.

The decision to marry falls within the masculine domain. Traditionally, it is not acceptable for women to actively look for someone to marry, or to propose marriage. If no one comes around to marry them, they end up as spinsters (*matandang dalaga*). Women can only hope and wait because men are the ones who must take women to the altar (*ihatid sa dambana*).

ihatid sa dambana idy. Pakasalan <Dapat mong ihatid sa dambana ang babaing iyong minamahal.>(DWF)

The decision to get married must be mutual, but the definition fails to indicate this. The better term to use is *ikasal* (to marry) because it indicates mutuality:

ikasal pd. Pag-isahing-dibdib ang magkasintahan sa harap ng pari o ng hukom o ng iba pang may kapangyarihan upang magpatibay o maialinsunod sa batas ang kanilang pag-iibigan at pagsasama. (DWF)

Words also embody the societal expectation that women must remain sexually uninitiated before marriage. *Dalaga* means a woman who is not married, but the phrase *walang dungis ang pagkababae, birhen* (no blemish on her womanhood, virgin) adds the expectation that a woman who is not married must remain a virgin. *Magbakod ang may masisira* is an idiomatic expression that means a woman's virginity must be guarded zealously.

dalaga png. Babaing wala pang asawa sk: soltera

dalaga pr. Walang dungis ang pagkababae sk: birhen. (DWF)

birgo adj. virgin, chaste, ref. to a woman esp. a young one who has not had sexual experience syn: donselya birhen, dalaga.(VIC)

magbakod ang may masisira idy. Ikinakapit sa mga anak na dalaga. Ang ibig sabihin ay pag-ingatan ang puri ng kanilang mga anak. <Si Mang Teroy ay naniwalang

dapat nga palang magbakod ang may masisira nang mabatid ang nangyari sa kanyang kaisa-isang anak na babae.>(DWF)

If a woman loses her virginity, she is referred to as *basag na salamin* (literally a broken mirror, damaged goods). Not only her virginity, but her womanhood, is devastated (*nasira ang pagkababae*). The word *disgrasyada* is used for women who have children out of wedlock, and means 'to be unlucky and wretched.'

**basag na salamin** idy. Babaing nasira ang pagkababae.(DWF)

**disgrasyada** pr. walang suwerte, kulang palad. 2. Nasiraan ng puri, nagkaanak sa pagkadalaga.

No such expectation applies to men. For men, losing their virginity is not equivalent to obliterating their manhood. On the contrary, it is even viewed as conquest. Men who have children out of wedlock are not considered wretched or without honor (*walang puri*).

The term *asawa* (husband/wife) also means "to attack sexually."

**asawa** n. 1. spouse, wife or husband, maybahay (wife). 2. (colloq) act of attacking a woman sexually.

**asawahin** v. to take a woman in marriage (pakasalan). 2. to attack sexually, ref. to a woman (VIC)

**hindot** png. Pagkubabaw o pagkubabang sa babae o ang galaw ng katawan kung isinasagawa ito. sk: asawa, pag-asawa, kana, pagkana.

**hindutin** pd. Gawin ang pagtatalik na sekswal (sa isang babae) sk: asawahin, kanain o paspasan, iyutin.(DWF)

With this definition, sexual aggression and rape are verbally legitimized. In the Philippines, many women who are raped are forced to marry their attackers to cover up the incident and to obscure the dishonor they have experienced.

**anakan** pd. Buntisan, buntisin; bigyan ng anak. (DWF)

With this construction of the definition, women appear to be passive receptacles. Men perform the act of getting women pregnant (*anakan*), denying women control over pregnancy and motherhood. Words reinforce aggression in men and passivity in

women.

### *Habonero / Habonera: The Feminine as Receptacle*

Filipino noun forms are usually neuter like *mag-aaral* (student), *magsasaka* (farmer), *manunulat* (writer), *guro* (teacher). However, many words from Spanish have been incorporated into the language. With the Spanish influence came the use of the feminine and masculine suffix (—a) and (—o). In some cases, the use of the suffix has equivalent connotations, for example *tiyo/tiya*, *abogado/abogada*, *lolo/lola*. But in other cases the use of the feminine suffix (—o) in order to refer to nouns refers to objects while the masculine suffix (—o) refers to persons.<sup>15</sup> *Habonera*, *asukarera*, *maleta* are words that refer to containers of soap, sugar or clothes while *habonero*, *asukakero*, *maletero* refer to a person who make these objects.

*habonera* png. Lalagyan ng sabon.

*habonero* png. Sinumang gumagawa o nagtitinda ng sabon. sk: magsasabon. (DWF)

*asukarera* png. Lalagyan ng asukal sk: asukalan.

*asukarero* png. Manggagawa o nagbibili ng asukal sk: mag-aasukal.(DWF)

*maleta* png. Ang bitbiting sisidlan ng mga damit at kagamitan ng isang naglalakbay.

*maletero* png. Manggagawa o nagtitinda ng maleta. (DWF)

While *obehero* and *abehero* refer to the persons who take care of beehives and sheep, the feminine noun refers to animals and bees.

*abehera* png. Bahay pukyutan, pugad-pukyutan.

*abehero* png. Tagapag-alaga ng pukyutan. (DWF)

*obehera* png. Tupa

*obehero* png. Tagapag-alaga ng tupa; pastol.(DWF)

In the following definition, the *Amerikano* refers to a male American while *americana* refers to a suit. Although female Americans are referred to as *Amerikana* in spoken language, the definition omits this.

*soldadora* n. solder; metal alloy used for soldering.

*soldador* n. Welder, solderer syn: manghihinang, tagahinang, tagapaghinang. (VIC)

*Amerikano* png sk: kano (sa lalaki).

*americana* png. kasuotan. (DWF)

The feminine suffix refers to the state of being inanimate and passive, like the metal alloy (*soldadora*) that needs to be moulded by the *soldador*. It also excludes the idea of women being actors or makers. Rather than using these uneven references, it is better to use the neuter forms like *pastol*, *tagapaghinang*, *magsasabon*, *mag-aasukal*, *mang-gagawa* and *tagapag-alaga* as these nouns do not exclude women.<sup>16</sup>

## Summary and Recommendations

The investigation of particular words from *the Vicassan's Pilipino-English Dictionary* and the *Diksyunaryo ng Wikang Filipino* shows that the dictionary reflects patriarchal attitudes and perpetuates sex role stereotypes.

The meaning of words is often derived from the male point of view. This is evidenced by the use of the word *babae* (woman) to mean *kerida* (mistress), and by the countless number of synonyms for *kiri* (flirt), *kulasisi* (mistress) and *puta* (whore). The dichotomy of the wife as *maybahay* and the husband as *tao* reinforces the sexist notion that women belong to the private sphere of the home, while men belong to the public sphere. Through language, nurturance, modesty, patience, and virginity are promoted as feminine traits. On the other hand, intelligence, strength, elegance, and gallantry are thought to be masculine traits. Consequently, active and strong women are called *tomboy*, while weak men are called *bakla* (gay).

Aggressive behavior in men is tolerated through the use of the word *asawahin* (to take as one's wife) as synonymous to rape. Passive behavior in women is the norm, especially in terms of courtship and marriage. Deviation from these accepted behavior results in numerous insults directed at aggressive women and passive males. Furthermore, offensive terms about women abound in the dictionary, like the extremely negative definition of *hima* (vaginal secretions), words that describe women as indecent, and terms that align women with vices and bad habits.

However, the point of this critique is not just to expose these patriarchal attitudes but to change them. While thought and consciousness shape language, language can also be used to alter one's consciousness.<sup>17</sup> If we can revise sexist definitions, we may be able to suppress the promotion of patriarchal attitudes. One example of this is the new Turkish law that removes sexist proverbs from the dictionary. According to an article from the wires (July 17, 2006),

The Turkish language institute has ordered the removal from its dictionaries of

proverbs that incite wife-beating and project women as the 'devil version of men.'<sup>18</sup>

Some examples of these proverbs are 'Do not leave a woman's back wanting for beatings or a woman's belly wanting for babies.'<sup>19</sup> This proverb reflects the attitude that wife-beating is acceptable and that multiple pregnancies are a fact of life. As a step towards changing these attitudes, sexist references have been expunged from written texts.

The guardian of the Turkish language says widely used phrases depicting women as second-class citizens must not be passed on to new generations.<sup>20</sup>

This change was achieved as a result of media campaigns against domestic violence.

Obliterating these sexist ideas from written documents will affect the consciousness of future readers, and will expel the sexist words' air of authority and legitimacy. Wife-beating, rape and other forms of violence against women must not be seen as legitimate acts but as unacceptable offenses that deserve sanctions. Sex-linked stereotypes and insults referring to women as flirts, mistresses or whores must be eliminated from language use.

*Future directions.* In the Philippines, there are many women's organizations that may work together in order to lobby for the removal of sexist definitions in the dictionary and for the promotion of nonsexist language. This is not to say that all definitions are sexist. Therefore, we must sift through the whole dictionary and find out which ones are sexist and which ones are not. Nonsexist definitions must be kept and even commended. For this, many books may be used as models like Mary Daly's *Wickedary* (London: The Women's Press, 1987).

The most ideal situation is to develop a comprehensive dictionary that is free of gender biases. Should this be achieved, this could promote nonsexist views on women and men. But this will not happen over night. Advocacy must be done in order for significant changes to be made in the dictionaries. Moreover, academicians must develop guidebooks for nonsexist writing in Filipino, like Casey Miller and Kate Swift's *Handbook for Nonsexist Writing*. These are only a few steps that we can take for the attainment of a gender-fair society for future generations.



### Endnotes:

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